

**SPECIAL MEETING
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT**

April 16, 2013

4:00 p.m.

Chairman Roy called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Roy, Shea, Craig, Greazzo, Gamache

Messrs.: T. Brennan, K. DeFrancis

TABLED ITEM

3. Resolutions and budget authorization providing for acceptance and expenditure of \$2.8 million bond for City schools technology upgrades.
(Tabled 4/02/2013; approved technology plan is attached.)

*On motion of **Alderman Shea**, duly seconded by **Alderman Gamache**, it was voted to remove this item from the table. The motion carried with Aldermen Craig and Greazzo voting in opposition.*

Chairman Roy stated Superintendent, if you could come forward and present this to us, please.

Dr. Thomas Brennan, Superintendent of Schools, stated Mr. Chairman, as we talked last time there was concern about the plan and the person who has created the plan is Mr. Delangie and I would like him, with your permission, to discuss it.

Chairman Roy stated as I told you, I called this meeting as quickly as possible because you said there is a concern about getting these things in place for next year and it is that important to the district.

Dr. Brennan stated yes, sir.

Mr. Jeff Delangie, Technology Resource Center Director, stated thank you, Chairman Roy and committee. At this time, I would like to take just a few minutes to deliver a summary overview of our Manchester School District technology plan. In previous plans we considered technology as a tool that teachers use to help educate students. Now, well into the second decade of the 21st century we consider technology as an integral part of our daily activities, not just tools but actually a change agent that is shaping our culture and our way of life. In Manchester we face a challenge to keep pace regionally, nationally and globally with our society which relies heavily on technology for communication, collaboration and commerce. Our current technology vision acknowledges these challenges. However, we are not satisfied to simply keep pace with our peers. Our mission is to position Manchester, one of the largest districts in the region, as a leader in the adoption of digital learning. The most important success factor in achieving a leadership role in our region is a commitment to sustainable funding in three key areas. The first area is technology infrastructure that will enhance the safety of our schools as well as support one computing device for every student, teacher and staff in the district. To accomplish this our plan includes an upgrade to the school's telephone systems and intercoms as well as an upgrade of each school's wired and wireless computer networking equipment. The second key area is professional development. Our plan will provide learning resources that all teachers, staff, students and families will have access to, creating a sustainable

professional learning community. Professional development will engage administrators, teachers and students, producing clear goals and expected learning outcomes. Professional development will be aligned with national educational technology standards, also referred to as NETS, as well as the New Hampshire Ed 306.42 information, communication technology standard, known as ITC. The third key area is computer equipment that will support learning outcomes aligned with these instructional standards. Our plan will provide enough computers to meet common core online assessment requirements, as well as modernize aging computers in the business media labs and school libraries. Since the average computer's life is five years or less, our strategic plan includes a computer refresh to ensure that we maintain current technology throughout the term of the bond commitment. Regarding the bond as a funding source, I view the bond as a line of credit that is used to sustain value over time. This funding commitment will add value to our community, paying dividends by attracting new business and residents. Finally, the most important commitment that we are making is to current and future students, that they will have access to a suitable technology infrastructure for the long term. This is crucial to their mastery of skills that they will need in today's marketplace and workplace.

Chairman Roy stated Dr. Brennan, last time you said that this is extremely important for the district going forward and you brought up this plan, which we didn't have last time, to the full School Board. Did they pass this?

Dr. Brennan replied I was not present at the last board meeting, but yes, they did pass it.

Chairman Roy asked what was the vote on it?

Ms. Karen DeFrancis, Business Administrator, replied I do not recall.

Alderman Shea stated I'm not sure of his line of thinking, but the School Board has approved this in totality. Is that correct?

Dr. Brennan replied yes, sir.

Alderman Shea asked was there any dissenting vote or was it a unanimous vote?

Mr. Delangie replied I believe it was a unanimous vote.

Alderman Shea stated they felt that we should go through with this project in terms of the entire amount rather than sequentially?

Mr. Delangie replied correct.

Alderman Shea asked why?

Mr. Delangie replied again, it is really focused on the commitment. Without long range strategic planning, we end up in the situation that we are in today with very old equipment and trying to keep pace. We want to ensure that we have current technology for the long term.

Alderman Shea asked may I ask the superintendent if the funds are not... I think I asked Bill Sanders this yesterday, if the funds are not allocated for this particular project... In other words, if the \$2.8 million in bonding is not provided, can the money be used for anything else other than the bonding?

Dr. Brennan replied it is my understanding that it cannot be used. In fact, we had talked about other options for bonding. I guess if you move some numbers around that might work, but as far as the bonding, you cannot bond anything such as a teacher, from what I understand.

Alderman Craig asked was the School Board asked whether they would prefer to have teachers in the classroom or this plan?

Dr. Brennan replied again, I was not present so I am relying on either of the memories here.

Mr. Delangie stated I think they were not asked that, however, I think that all School Board members would agree that teachers are important. However, using bond funding, I don't think, is the right way to sustain teachers.

Alderman Craig stated my question was whether they were asked that so I appreciate your answer. I watched the last School Board meeting and it is my understanding that we have funding of \$180,000 from a SIG grant for nine schools to increase bandwidth and Wi-Fi so we probably don't need to bond that full \$500,000. Correct?

Mr. Delangie replied I would recommend not taking that out of the bond. That is not totally correct. What we have when we make an initial capital purchase is a recurring operating cost associated with that. I would recommend making sure that we have enough funding and not taking out that money and making sure that we have funding for recurring and ongoing costs.

Alderman Craig asked so if we didn't have the SIG grant we wouldn't have enough money for recurring costs? We would not be able to sustain this, is that what you are saying?

Mr. Delangie replied that would become part of our operating costs.

Alderman Craig stated during our Joint Committee on Education, Mr. Robidas mentioned that there was probably a 50-50 match from the state for the security portion of the bond, the \$550,000. Have we heard anything more? He seemed pretty confident that we would be able to get that.

Ms. DeFrancis stated as we discussed at that meeting, the most current numbers that we had were about \$500,000 and that would include the intercoms as well as the telephone upgrade. When we met with Kevin O'Maley and the group that is together and working on this plan there were other options that we would want to add to this plan so we actually think that that \$500,000 number will be more than \$500,000. Once we get that final number then we can determine whether we will get the 50% of that, but it was my understanding that we were pretty confident that we would get that 50%. However, I think that number is going to be higher than \$500,000 as a total number. You can see in the plan here we have \$400,000 for the telephone and intercoms.

Alderman Craig stated I guess I would just like to make a couple more points. My thought with this was to not bond the full amount, not to use the balance of the bonding to hire teachers, but the way the mayor has set up this program, he is using the book loan to pay for the debt service so if you only bond a portion of it, say \$1 million, when Dr. Brennan was here last, he said that he is not going to get the computers for another three to five years so I don't see why we would... You

can correct that in a moment, but I don't see why we would bond that if we are not going to have computers in the schools for three to four years and pay debt service on it, when instead, we can use that money from the book loan to hire six teachers. That has been my pause with this. I'm a bit concerned regarding this conversation that we've had with the new numbers that have come up lately and we are hearing now that you may need more and it is just not making me feel comfortable. I don't like how this is being pulled out of the budget process. I would like to hear, Dr. Brennan, your perspective as to whether or not you believe this is something you feel we need to approve or address tonight or if it can wait until June and we can address it then with the rest of the budget process.

Dr. Brennan stated in terms of my statement relative to the purchase of the hardware, if I didn't say it, the way I intended to say it was that it would be over a three to four year period. It is not that we would wait three or four years to buy the computers. There would be a spread of time so that we would have current technology. I wasn't suggesting that we don't buy technology hardware for three or four years, but rather that we identify core equipment that we need and then spread that over the next three or four years. That is the intent. I don't know how it sounded. As far as thinking it is important, yes, I do and we have had a conversation about this. I am fearful that if we don't secure this funding now I don't know if we will be able to get it in the future.

Alderman Craig asked why? What makes you fearful of that?

Dr. Brennan replied nearly five years of working in this district, quite candidly, and not knowing exactly when money is available and if something else is going to come up. We have been putting off the development of the infrastructure for our School District for over a decade and a half. We have fallen further and

further behind. There are times, and I'll go back to my first budget when I came here and there were supposed to be a lot of things in that budget when I signed the agreement then within a 48 hours period of time, a significant adjustment had been made relative to personnel. I have not seen any other indicators to tell me that in two years we can come back and get that money. It is my personal feeling. I just don't see it happening.

Alderman Craig asked do you feel the need that this board has to approve this or address it this evening or can we wait until the budget process?

Dr. Brennan replied yes, the sooner the better and hopefully this board and this committee would resolve the budget before June. You said June and everyday we wait it is a problem for us.

Alderman Craig stated worse case scenario would be June. You have already gone out for RFP for the bandwidth, correct? And you have proposals back?

Mr. Delangie replied correct.

Alderman Craig asked so why the need to hurry this?

Dr. Brennan replied I would say just the fact that we know... I guess I'll ask you the question: What could happen in the interim that would make it different? What would happen if we didn't ask for the \$2.8 million? Is there some hope that that money would be raised in another way so that we could get the infrastructure that we need?

Alderman Craig replied again, my concern boils down to teachers and that the book loan is tied to this is concerning to me. If we find that we need to hire teachers then that is a priority. I believe that we need to start focusing on meeting minimum state standards and contracts and protecting the \$7 million of revenue that we have coming in to the district any way that we can. I of course want technology in the district, but because this bond is tied to that money I'm a bit apprehensive on moving it so quickly.

Ms. DeFrancis stated I just wanted to comment on the book loan. I'm not sure if you are aware, but the numbers that we submitted to the aldermen, the book loan is already out of that number so when you talk about possibly using that book loan to possibly pay for teachers, it is actually not in next year's budget.

Alderman Craig stated no, I understand that.

Chairman Roy stated I will follow up on that with you, Ms. DeFrancis. The book loan is actually a bond that the City took out and we had to make it into a loan.

Ms. DeFrancis stated I understand that it was a loan, not a bond.

Chairman Roy stated I believe we took a bond and then we made the loan, but that is okay.

Alderman Greazzo asked Dr. Brennan, with this program, do you plan on just supplying the students with these computers? Do they have to put down a deposit? Do they have to cost share at all?

Dr. Brennan replied no, the initial phase would be getting our teachers geared up and provide them with teacher training and then as we go forward, we would make that available. We haven't worked out the logistics of having a deposit. That is not in the initial planning. We haven't talked about that. The other piece is that we also hope to coincide the advancement of technology with bring your own devices which may help us in the long run, but it also would have an impact on our bandwidth. We would have to make that adjustment if necessary. There are other items. That is my answer.

Alderman Greazzo stated so you don't have... If they break it you are going to have to buy them another one. They don't have any responsibility for it.

Mr. Delangie stated our plan currently provides... These are computers that are used in the schools. They are not computers that students will be taking home.

Alderman Greazzo stated let me stop you there. You are going to buy a bunch of computers that these kids could actually do stuff at home with, but they have to leave it at school like a school book.

Mr. Delangie stated no. The primary goal is to make sure that we have enough computers to meet the common core assessment standards. That means that we need to have x amount of computers for every student, grades three through eight and grade 11 in order to fulfill the online testing within a period of five days. The first phase of this funding would provide enough computers in the schools to meet that commitment. The other primary goal from an infrastructure perspective is to allow what we call "bring your own device".

Alderman Greazzo asked you could do that now though, couldn't you?

Mr. Delangie replied no. Our network cannot support that. We also need to consider the equity percentage because with a 68% free and reduced lunch in Manchester we have a significant number of students who will not be able to afford to be able to bring their own computers. We need to make sure that we have enough computers in the schools to provide equity. The purchase of these computers meets that goal as well. Just to be clear, these computers are not purchased so that students will be taking them home for use. They are in-school-use computers in mobile carts, in labs, in libraries.

Alderman Greazzo stated before I get too deep, Mr. Chairman, I'll defer to other members who aren't part of the committee who may have questions.

Alderman Shea stated I wanted to ask, when Alderman Craig mentioned about how long it would be, Mr. Delangie, you sort of said that it wouldn't be that long. I know the superintendent indicated that it wouldn't be three years, but you are head of the computer division so could you tell me how long it would be. In other words, the discussion here is to have the bond and pay for part of it and then the other part either pay for something else with it or not use that. How long would you anticipate that it would be; the whole implementation of the bonding?

Mr. Delangie replied the goal in using a bond to fund technology purchases is about making a long term commitment to our community. The initial implementation includes upgrading our infrastructure. The infrastructure is the wiring and the wireless network and the bandwidth to support more computers coming into the classroom. The second component of this is actually adding a number of computers to meet the requirement for state online assessments.

Alderman Shea asked time wise, how long is that?

Mr. Delangie replied we can have this up and running most likely, the infrastructure piece, by September, by the start of school and the computers rolled out probably within the first quarter of the new school year 2014.

Alderman Shea stated trimesters now.

Mr. Delangie stated the assessment goal is 2015 when the state goes live with online assessments. I see the concern about the rollout, but what we will be using for deployment are vendors and other contracting services to assist us. I have also developed a great relationship with UNH and their senior IT programs that have been providing a tremendous amount of help within the district.

Alderman Shea stated the intent of this committee is to move it to the full board, but we cannot, without the necessary votes, move it there. My thinking is this: we have a superintendent of schools, we have the business manager, we have a man in charge of computers, we have the full support of the school committee and we are holding it back because we think that we, as a person or committee, know more about what is best for the school system. Why are we paying a superintendent what we are paying him and the other people? It makes no sense to me. We hired people to do a job all over this City yet we feel that we, as individuals or individual, as it were, know more about how the schools should be handled than the people handling it. That is my thinking on the matter.

Alderman O'Neil stated this can be for anyone of the three folks presenting. In Mr. Delangie's memo it has the priority list: digital telephone systems and intercoms as the number one priority at \$500,000. There have been some

references to safety, but there is nothing in what I read that indicates the safety component of it. Can someone explain that to me?

Mr. Delangie replied currently, the telephone system that we use has no capacity to identify where a 9-1-1 call is coming from. One of the first things that we would want in a new telephone system is to be able to identify exactly where, and who, is placing a 9-1-1 call so that in a safety situation, the police or Fire Department would know where that call is coming from. We don't have that capability today.

Alderman O'Neil asked who is going to know where that is? The front office of each school?

Mr. Delangie replied the front office, as well as the Police Department, and Fire Department. They can be directly connecting to the City systems.

Alderman O'Neil asked the City system or is it going to go to the state first?

Mr. Delangie replied I don't know why it would go to the state.

Alderman O'Neil stated that is where a 9-1-1 goes. We have enhanced 9-1-1.

Mr. Delangie stated the point is that the system would enable us...

Alderman O'Neil interjected I understand the point, but I'll tell you what I am concerned about and we talked about this when the School District was in. I don't believe that the police chief has been engaged in these discussions. I don't believe the fire chief has been, I don't believe the public health director has been. They

are the three people who are responsible for public safety in this city. That is a fact. It doesn't matter if it is in a school or on a street corner. They are responsible for public safety in this city. The School District is not an island unto itself. It is part of the City of Manchester. In a conversation with all three of them not one of them had been involved in any of these discussions and I'm disappointed to hear that. We are talking about safety, we are coming off of the Newtown incident and the three people responsible for public safety aren't involved in the discussions and I'm bothered by that to be honest with you. I don't know if that would have been their priority. It may have been or they may have recommended taking the \$500,000 and doing something else with it.

Chairman Roy stated the clerk is telling me we have five minutes left. If this does get put out to the full board tonight, will you be available for questioning tonight?

Dr. Brennan replied yes, sir.

Chairman Roy stated if you could wrap it up, Alderman O'Neil.

Alderman O'Neil stated as a matter of time with a 4:30 meeting I will save my questions for the full board.

Mayor Gatsas stated for clarification sake, I think that the Facilities Division came in and said that the two most important features for safety in the schools with what they have done for an analysis throughout the schools was the intercom system and the phone system. That was Mr. O'Maley and that was the advice that he gave the School Board. That is who they depend on for their discussions and that is who came forward saying that the phone system and the intercom system were the two features that they thought were most important for safety.

Alderman O'Neil stated I didn't know Mr. O'Maley was responsible for public safety in the city.

Chairman Roy stated if there is no further discussion at this time, I would look for a motion and we can move it to the full board and have a further discussion there.

*On motion of **Alderman Shea**, duly seconded by **Alderman Roy**, it was voted to approve this item. The motion carried with Aldermen Craig and Greazzo voting in opposition.*

Chairman Roy stated I will ask the clerk to report that out tonight because it is time sensitive and Dr. Brennan said that he will be here for further discussion tonight.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Greazzo**, duly seconded by **Alderman Shea**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee